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CONSTITUTION and BY-LAWS

of the

Church of the Open Door

Sixth and Hope Streets

LOS ANGELES, CAL.

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

Regretting the divisions that now exist in the visible Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but recognizing and rejoicing in the great good that is being accomplished by the churches of the different evangelical denominations, desiring the fellowship and co-operation of all believers in all the churches, we, the undersigned, as an independent, interdenominational church, adopt and subscribe to the following Constitution:

ARTICLE I.

Name

This organization shall be known as The Church of the Open Door.

ARTICLE II.

Doctrine of the Church

The doctrines to which we require the assent of all applicants for membership are contained in the following Articles of Faith:

ARTICLE III.

Covenant of the Church

Those received into the membership of the Church will publicly assent to the following covenant:—

We, then, the members of this Church, do affectionately welcome you to the fellowship with us in the blessings of the Gospel, and covenant together, God helping us, that as strangers and pilgrims we will refrain from fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11). That we will put away from us all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as

God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us (Eph. 4:31, 32). That as we have opportunity we will do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). That we will remember them which have the rule over us, who speak unto us the word of God (Heb. 13:7). That we will submit to the loving oversight and discipline of the members and officers of this Church of Christ, and that we will give as God hath prospered us (1 Cor. 16:2), not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7).

Upon assent to the above Articles of Faith and Covenant, those received into the membership of the Church shall be given the right hand of fellowship, and the following benediction be pronounced:—

"And may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

ARTICLE IV.

Membership

SECTION A.—Persons desiring to unite with this Church, upon confession of their faith, shall meet with and be examined by the Elders of the Church as to their Christian experience, their assurance of salvation, the ground of their hope and their doctrinal belief.

SECTION B.—Those desiring to unite with the Church upon letters of recommendation from other churches of Christ shall present their letters in person to the Elders of the Church.

SECTION C.—Those who have applied for membership either upon confession of faith or by letter, and whose examination has been deemed satisfactory by the Elders, shall be recommended to the Church for membership, and when approved by the Church at some regular meeting of the Church, will be publicly received into

fellowship, at such time as may be determined by the Elders.

(Section C amended January 23, 1918.)

Section D.—All applicants, both those uniting upon profession of faith and by letter, shall be required to assent to the Articles of Faith, to join publicly in accepting the covenant of the Church, and shall sign the Constitution of the Church. No one becomes a member of this Church in good and regular standing until he has signed the Constitution of the Church.

Section E.—In case of application for membership by evangelists and Christian workers whose circumstances make it impossible for them to appear before the Elders and to be received publicly into fellowship of the Church, the applicant shall fill out a blank, certifying his acceptance of the Articles of Faith and agreement to the Covenant of the Church, and shall also satisfy the Elders as to his or her Christian experience and standing. The Elders being satisfied of their fitness to become members of this Church, shall recommend them to the Church, and being duly voted upon by the Church, and signing a copy of the Constitution, such applicants may be received into membership without appearing in person.

ARTICLE V.

Conduct

Section A.—We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conduct loyal obedience to all the moral and spiritual teachings laid down in the Word of God.

Section B.—We shall require of each other that we shall abstain from such amusements, habits and practices as will cause others to stumble, or bring reproach upon the cause of Christ.

Section C.—We assert our conviction that proportionate giving is a positive command in the Word of God, and we pledge ourselves to a systematic contribution for the support of the Church of such a portion of our income as we believe God requires of us, according to the principle laid down in 1 Cor. 16:2.

ARTICLE VI.

Government

The Church shall be governed by the Pastors and a Board of Elders, chosen by the Church in the way hereafter prescribed.

ARTICLE VII.

Officers of the Church

Elders

SECTION A.—There shall be five or more Elders of the Church. These Elders shall be elected for three years, and shall be eligible for re-election on the expiration of their term of office. At the first election the full number of Elders shall be chosen and in three groups, to serve for one, two and three years respectively, the full three years' rule for all prevailing only on and after 1918. None but men of irreproachable character as to godliness and devotion to the spiritual welfare of the congregation shall be eligible to election to the eldership.

The Pastor or Pastors

(and Assistant Pastors, if such be employed)

SECTION B.—The Pastor or Pastors (and Assistant Pastors, if such shall be employed) shall be chosen by ballot at a meeting of the congregation, regularly called for the purpose, notice of such meeting having been given in at least two regular meetings of the Church preceding the meeting. A majority of at least two-thirds of the voters present shall be necessary to elect.

Deacons

SECTION C.—Deacons shall be chosen at the annual meeting. Their term of office and method of election shall be identical with that of the Elders. The Deacons shall gather, treasure, disburse and account for to the congregation, the Deacons' Fund.

Stewards

SECTION D.—There shall be three or more Stewards elected for five years each. The Stewards shall be especially responsible for the

financial interests of the Church, in seeing that all property owned by the Church is properly looked after, the money necessary for carrying on the work of the church be secured, and for the expenditure of all money for carrying on the work of the Church, exclusive of the Deacons' Fund.

Treasurer

SECTION E.—The Treasurer shall be elected for one year, but shall hold office until a successor is elected. He shall hold and disburse all funds of the Church, except the Deacons' Fund, under the direction of the Stewards, and make an annual report, which shall be carefully inspected by the Auditing Committee, consisting of three members of the Church, who shall be appointed by the Elders and Stewards.

Financial Secretary

SECTION F.—There shall be a Financial Secretary, who shall co-operate with the Treasurer in raising money, and who shall also act as Assistant Church Clerk. The Financial Secretary shall be elected for one year at the regular annual meeting.

Clerk

SECTION G.—The Clerk shall keep the records of all the sessions of the congregational meetings of the Church.

Superintendent of the Sunday School

SECTION H.—The Superintendent of the Sunday School shall be chosen by the Church at its annual meeting. He shall perform all duties usually devolving upon such an office.

ARTICLE VIII.

Church Discipline

The Discipline of the Church shall be entirely entrusted to the Pastors and the Board of Elders, and shall be exercised according to the following principles:—

Excommunications

SECTION A.—In all cases of conduct unbecom-

ing in a Christian or heretical doctrine so opposed to the Church's life and faith as to destroy its peace and fellowship, procedure shall be in the following manner: Charges shall be put in writing and placed in the hands of the suspected person, and he or she shall be summoned to meet the Elders at some date not more than two or less than one week subsequently. The accused, on being notified, may immediately select any member of the Board of Elders to assist or represent him or her in the examination, while the Elders shall appoint one of its members for prosecution. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible and all the facts ascertainable, if the majority believes him or her to be guilty, the name of said party shall be stricken from the roll and publicly read as excommunicated at the first reception of members succeeding the trial.

Suspension

SECTION B.—In any case of offense in conduct or doctrine not judged worthy of excommunication, the offender, having been summoned before the Elders and given a fair hearing, after having been counselled by the Elders, may be suspended by them from the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and from the exercise of all rights of Church membership, for such a time as they see fit.

Erasure from the Roll

SECTION C.—The name of any member who shall be absent from the services of the Church for a period of twelve months without giving satisfactory reason for such absence, may be erased from the roll of membership, provided the address of such person is unknown. All persons leaving the city for a time, desiring to retain their membership, should keep the church informed of their whereabouts through correspondence with the Church Clerk at least once in six months. Persons living within reasonable distance of the Church and failing to attend with regularity, or absenting themselves from the Lord's Supper without giving satisfactory reason for non-attendance for such absence, may be regarded as giving just cause for discipline.

SECTION D.—Failure on the part of the accused to appear for trial shall not prevent the Elders in any of the cases mentioned above from examining the case and rendering a decision in accordance with the testimony received.

Church Letters

SECTION E.—All members of this Church wishing to withdraw and unite with some other Church, shall be given a letter of recommendation to any other orthodox church which they may select, provided they are not subject to discipline at the time such application for letter is made. All applications for dismissal from this Church, and recommendation for membership in other orthodox churches should be made in writing, such application being addressed to the Clerk of the Church of the Open Door, 540 South Hope St., Los Angeles. All those making application should be careful to state the exact name of the church with which they desire to affiliate. Experience teaches the unwisdom of granting letters on the request of others than those to whom they are to be issued. The names of those to whom the letters are to be granted will still remain on our records until, and only until, satisfactory evidence is received that these names have been transferred to the records of some other church.

ARTICLE IX.

Meetings

SECTION A.—The Annual Meeting of the Church for hearing reports, election of officers, and such other business as would naturally come before it, shall be held on the last Wednesday in January.

SECTION B.—The Church may be called together for the transaction of any legitimate business, by a majority vote of the Elders, notice of such meeting having been given at two regular Lord's meetings of the Church preceding the day appointed.

ARTICLE X.

Election of Officers

The Church members shall elect all officers by

ballot, and a majority of all votes cast shall be required to elect.

ARTICLE XI.

Ordination to the Ministry

As there is every reason to suppose that consecrated laymen will be raised up among us who have a calling and a gift of God for the public preaching of the Word, such men may be ordained to preach and administer the ordinances, by a two-thirds vote of the Church, provided the Elders of the Church are unanimous in their conviction that the candidate has suitable gifts, and, further, provided their conviction is based on his actual experimental preaching rather than on their hopes of what he may do, and provided that his experience shall have covered a period of at least one year of public preaching.*

ARTICLE XII.

All such powers as examination of candidates to membership, discipline and supervision of members and organizations in the Church, shall be vested in the Board of Elders in co-operation with the Pastors and Assistant Pastors. All officers in the Church must be members of the Church.

ARTICLE XIII.

Amendments

The Church may make from time to time such amendments to this Constitution as may seem necessary, but such amendments must be submitted to the membership in a written form at least four weeks previous to the meeting when the amendment is made, and can be adopted only by the vote of two-thirds of the membership then present.

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*Article XI. has been dropped from the Constitution. See Minutes of Church meeting of July 17, 1918.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I.

Agreement with the Directorate of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.

Whereas, the Church of the Open Door occupies the premises of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and has use of same free of rent; and

Whereas, the charter and titles of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles are based on conditions involving interests vital to its property rights and solemn obligations; and

Whereas, the conduct and methods of the Church of the Open Door, intimately associated as it is with the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, will obviously be regarded in public opinion as meeting the approval of the Institute itself;

Therefore, Be it Resolved, That considering the aforesaid facts and circumstances, while surrendering none of our prerogatives, and ignoring none of our obligations as a regularly organized church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the undersigned members of the Church of the Open Door, do solemnly agree and covenant that we will frankly and fully submit, at their request, to at any time revise, amend or reverse any official act, proceeding, or utterance of the Church, or any popular method, conduct, ways or means, that may be deemed by the Directorate of the said Institute to be inconsistent with their obligations, pledges or purposes, or inimical to what they may deem to be to the best interests of the Institute or its work.

ARTICLE II.

The Board of Elders

Section A.—The Moderator of the Board shall be the Pastor of the Church when he is present. In his absence the Associate Pastor shall moderate the meeting of the Board of Elders. In the absence of both Pastor and Associate Pastor, the Board of Elders may choose one of their own number to preside.

SECTION B.—There shall be a Clerk of the Board of Elders, elected by themselves, whose duty it shall be (a) to keep full and accurate reports of all the proceedings of that body; (b) to engross and maintain a complete roll of membership with a record of the status of each member; (c) to issue all letters of dismission at the order of the Board.

SECTION C.—Meetings of the Board of Elders shall be held at least once a week.
Intermediate meetings may be held at the discretion of the Pastor and Clerk of the Board of Elders, or by either one of them, should any exigencies arise that demand it.

ARTICLE III.

Board of Deacons

SECTION A.—The Board of Deacons shall elect their own Chairman, Clerk and Treasurer. They shall arrange for ways and means of raising and distributing the Deacons' Fund, and diligently seek out and bear spiritual consolation to the distressed and needy of the congregation, with such material assistance as may be in their power to render in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Church.

Deacons' Fund

SECTION B.—The purpose of the Deacons' Fund is to provide from time to time for the necessary expense of the Lord's Supper, and to assist the poor of the congregation.

AMENDMENTS

As there are so many people in Los Angeles for limited periods of time who desire a church home, and who do not wish to sever relations with their home churches,

Be it Resolved, That Section "C" of our By-Laws governing recommendations for membership be amended by the following addition:

Persons who have church homes outside of Los Angeles, but who are in the city temporarily, may become Affiliated Members without

severing their home church relations by appearing before the Session and passing a satisfactory examination and signing the Church Covenant. Upon removal from the city the names of such persons will be automatically dropped from the roll of Affiliated Membership.

The Affiliated Membership of the Church shall be subject to all the rules and regulations which govern the other members of the Church.